

REPORT

European Foreign Policy towards Eastern Europe: Future of Eastern Partnership beyond 2020

Wednesday 4th of December 2019

Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU

- The expert panel discussion titled "*European Foreign Policy towards Eastern Europe: Future of Eastern Partnership beyond 2020*" was organised by the Think Visegrad - V4 Think Tank Platform (represented by EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy) together with the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union and Association for International Affairs (AMO). The event was organised to mark the 10th anniversary since the Eastern Partnership policy has been launched and reflect on recently closed public consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020.

The welcome words were delivered by H.E. **Tomáš Szunyog** (Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Political and Security Committee, Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU). The keynote speech was presented by Ms **Katariná Mathernová** (Deputy Director-General, DG NEAR, European Commission). The first panel focusing on "*Political and security aspects of the future Eastern Partnership*" featured Mr **Jaroslav Kurfürst** (Special Envoy for the Eastern Partnership, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), **Alisa Muzergues** (Research Fellow, GLOBSEC) and **Luc Devigne** (Deputy Managing Director, Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia and OSCE, EEAS). The panel was moderated by Mr **Pavel Havlíček** (Analyst, Association for International Affairs, Czechia).

The second panel titled "*Economic dimension and shape of the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020*" featured

Mr **Daniel Szeligowski** (Head of Eastern Europe Programme & Senior Research Fellow on Ukraine, Polish Institute for International Affairs, Poland), Mr **Sandor Ackermann** (Analyst, Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary) and Mr **Yurii Vdovenko** (Deputy Chairman of the Board, Head of Economic eurointegration of Ukraine studies, UA PRISM, Ukraine). This panel was moderated by Ms **Zuzana Stuchlíková** (Head of Brussels Office, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, Belgium). The event was closed by my remarks of Mr **Jaroslav Kurfürst**.

The event was opened by H.E. **Tomáš Szunyog** who warmly welcomed the participants on behalf of the hosting organisation. The opening keynote speech was delivered by Ms **Katariná Mathernová**. She noted that since the history of Eastern Partnership started ten years ago in Prague, the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU is a symbolic venue for such event.

Following up with assessing the success of the Eastern Partnership, she called for a continuing focus on the region from the EU leaders. Ms Mathernová stressed that Eastern Partnership should deliver for people in the region, mentioning investments into connectivity as an example.

The first panel focused on political and security aspects of the Eastern Partnership and was opened by Ms **Alisa Muzergues**, who made remarks on the question of the rule of law in the respective countries. The rule of law issue in these countries is not a technical problem, but rather a question of political culture and individual responsibility of actors. Building of a resilient country with strong institutions upholding the rule of law is a long journey which takes time. She proposed to create trust-building projects, such as political-security dialogues between the EU Member States and the Eastern Partnership countries and suggested to involve also like-minded countries, such as the United States, Canada and Japan. Mr **Jaroslav Kurfürst** offered his definition of what resilience means and elaborated on what can the European Union do better for the Eastern Partnership framework. He stressed the need for stronger participation and dialogue between partners. Civil protection can present a key focus area, as parts of the Eastern neighbourhood suffer from external threats from Russia. The European Union should strive to enhance visibility of the Eastern Partnership not only in the project countries, but also in the EU Member States - better communication is needed. Lastly, Mr Kurfürst concluded that the humanitarian help provided by the European Union and the Member States to EaP countries should not be labelled as international help, but rather carry the EU label. Mr **Luc Devigne** took on requirements for a successful future of the Eastern Partnership project and stressed that it should not turn into a conflict resolution mechanism. In the long-run, the Eastern Partnership cannot be successful if in the respective countries are ruled by oligarchs. Lastly,

Mr Devigne noted that a greater differentiation is needed among the 6 partner states.

The second panel dealt with socio-economic aspects of the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020. Mr **Szeligowski** opened the second panel explaining the Polish position, which highlights the importance of investments, infrastructure development and a focus on youth. According to his opinion, the Member States should be more engaged with the Eastern Partnership as the EU cannot achieve its goals solely alone - private investors need to be brought on board as well. Mr Szeligowski concluded that the current structures of the Eastern Partnership should be maintained, but the EU should take advantage of a flexibility which they allow. Mr **Vdovenko** presented the view from one of the partner countries, Ukraine. He emphasized the importance of differentiated approach towards the project countries as they differ significantly, especially in their relation to Russia. According to Mr Vdovenko, Ukraine has currently a lot of ideas on how to cooperate including current measures such as aid cooperation, joint programs, but is also prepared for more technical cooperation in terms of investments, research and innovation as well as programs focusing specially on youth education. Last speaker, Mr **Ackermann**, presented a view from Hungary and expressed his concern about the lack of publicity of the Eastern Partnership within the EU. The only relationship with the respective countries are measured only bilaterally among the two countries, which is symptomatic to the lack of vision he currently sees in the Eastern Partnership.

Mr Kurfürst closed the event by thanking the organizers and all participants and expressed his hope that the Eastern Partnership will find its way to the top of the EU agenda.